



116TH INDIANA GENERAL ASSEMBLY ★

SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

NEWS RELEASE

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Week in Review at the Indiana General Assembly State Senator Sue Errington, D-Muncie

INDIANAPOLIS—The General Assembly has now moved into the second half of the legislative session. Bills already approved by their house of origin have crossed over for consideration by the opposite chamber. Of the 831 proposals initially introduced in both chambers, the Senate has begun its review of 104 House-passed bills, while House members consider 135 bills advanced by the Senate. Legislation which moves through the opposite chamber without amendments will proceed to the governor for final consideration and possible signature into law. Legislators have until March 14th to conclude business. This brief summary highlights some of the bills now under consideration in the Senate.

Jobs for unemployed Hoosiers – Legislation **co-sponsored by Errington** aimed at getting some of the state's 300,000 unemployed workers back to work is awaiting a hearing by the Senate Appropriations Committee. [House Bill \(HB\) 1002](#) would require companies doing business with the state or local units of government under public works contracts to have 80% of their workforce comprised of Indiana residents. Public works projects include the construction of new buildings for universities and schools, and improvements to the state's infrastructure including roads and bridges. State appropriations totaling more than \$300 million reserved for construction and renovation projects at state universities and colleges is awaiting final approval by the State Budget Committee. If released, the projects could get underway and provide immediate work and jobs in numerous local communities throughout the state.

Smoking ban – Legislation for a proposed statewide smoking ban is awaiting a hearing by the Senate Public Policy and Interstate Cooperation Committee. While [HB 1131](#) would ban smoking in many of the state's restaurants and workplaces, it includes exemptions for bars, casinos and private clubs.

Net metering – Expanded net metering opportunities under [HB 1094](#) **sponsored by Errington** would help reduce utility bills and increase renewable energy production in Indiana. Net metering laws allow consumers who generate excess electricity through wind mills, solar panels and other renewable energy technologies, to send any excess power back onto the electric grid for a credit on their energy bill. Current law limits participation to homeowners and schools with a generating capacity of 10 kilowatts or less. The legislation would expand net metering opportunities to all consumers and increase the creditable amount. Similar provisions contained in [Senate Bill \(SB\) 313](#) are now being considered by the House of Representatives. **Errington is a major contributor on both bills and is a co-author of this measure.**

Building energy-efficient buildings – [HB 1063](#) would require certain government buildings to be designed and constructed or renovated to achieve or exceed the performance criteria to meet the silver rating on the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Green building standards provide long-term savings through reduced water usage, improved energy efficiency, utilization of renewable energy, and use of natural lighting. Proponents maintain that green buildings can be built at no extra cost and save taxpayers 40 percent on energy bills over the life of the buildings. **Errington is co-sponsoring this bill in the Senate.**

Veteran issues – Several bills now under Senate consideration dealing with issues affecting veterans include [HB 1111](#), a bill **co-sponsored by Errington** which would provide a three percent price preference for businesses owned by veterans for purposes of state public works contracts, state

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purchasing of goods and services, and state highway contracts. In addition, the bill recognizes the efforts of U.S. Merchant Marines who served during World War II and would make them eligible for veteran's license plates and grant them access to the Indiana Soldiers Home. [HB 1165](#) provides that a veteran's service connected disability benefit would be protected from judicial lien, process, or proceeding to collect a debt if this bill passes.

Worker's compensation issues – Workers injured on the job or those who experience occupational disease disabilities would be able to receive emergency medical assistance by any physician rather than having to wait for the arrival of the doctor specified by the worker's employer under [HB 1116](#). This legislation would provide faster treatment and prevent some injuries from becoming permanent.

Township government – [HB 1181](#) would require a public question to be placed on the November 2010 general election ballot in each township regarding whether the voters want to retain a township trustee and township board. If a majority of voters choose to eliminate the township trustee and board, the powers and duties would be transferred to the county on January 1, 2012.

Texting while driving – [HB 1279](#) would impose a Class C infraction if a person uses a cell phone to send a text message or e-mail message while operating a moving motor vehicle. However, a driver could use hands-free or voice-operated technology to send a text or e-mail message while driving. A Class C infraction carries a fine of up to \$500.

Funding grants for adult education – Assistance with the completion of K-12 graduation requirements for high school dropouts is the impetus behind [HB 1117](#). The bill would provide grants to school corporations with stand-alone adult education programs. The grants would come from the state tuition support distribution appropriation that would be set up to allow funding to follow a student who has left a traditional K-12 school and enters an adult education program. Passage of this legislation would encourage those students to complete their high school education.

Upcoming Senate deadlines

February 25	Deadline for committees to review bills passed by the opposite chamber
March 3	Last day for the Senate to approve House bills
March 14	Lawmakers must complete all business by midnight

To stay informed about legislation moving through the General Assembly or to track legislation, log on to www.in.gov/legislative/. This site provides complete bill information as well as committee hearing dates and agendas. From this site, you can also tune in to House and Senate floor debate as well as some committee hearings.

Citizens can stay current on legislation scheduled for action through a free online program available at www.BillWatch.in.gov. Track up to ten bills and receive e-mail notifications only when action is taken on those bills.

Visit my Senate web site at www.in.gov/s26 and subscribe to receive periodic e-mails about the major issues facing us this year. The Senate Democrats are also providing multimedia updates on the daily activities in the Senate at [The Briefing Room](#) and Twitter updates at [@INSenDems](#). Personal contact with constituents has a direct impact on the legislation we consider and what ultimately becomes law. Feel free to contact me with your comments and concerns regarding pending legislation or if I can provide any assistance.

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